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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz reported that the Gaza cease-fire (tahdiya) deal is expected to take effect in a couple of days. Maariv reported that

Defense Minister Barak during his visit to Sharm el Sheikh told Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that the continuation of terror from Gaza will lead to a military confrontation, and that the truce will only be possible if Israel's conditions -- cessation of all forms of terror -- are met. The Egyptian Chief of Intelligence, General Omar Suleiman, who has been mediating between the parties, is scheduled to meet today with the heads of the Palestinian factions in the Strip. Israel is waiting to learn from Suleiman whether the Palestinian groups will agree to an unofficial deal to cease terrorist activities in return for an end to IDF attacks. According to Ha'aretz, Israel does not intend to officially announce that it has accepted the tahdiya deal, but will let the situation unfold gradually -- and evaluate the results on the ground. The Jerusalem Post quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying in recent closed-door meetings that Israel is skeptical that a cease-fire with Hamas will be reached and that, therefore, the IDF is preparing for a large-scale military operation. The Jerusalem Post quoted Osama Hamdan, Hamas's representative in Lebanon, as saying yesterday that Israel is mistaken if it thinks that a truce with Hamas would mean that the "resistance operations" would end. Hamdan added: "Hamas does not trust the Israelis because they are likely to violate the tahdiya and launch fresh aggressions against our people. As far as Hamas is concerned, all options remain open."

Ha'aretz reported that on Thursday, when Livni meets her French counterpart Bernard Kouchner, she intends to ask for clarifications on the contacts that France is having with Hamas. Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that senior political sources in Jerusalem expressed anger yesterday at comments made by the French minister yesterday confirming that France has contacts with Hamas officials, and that these have been in place "even before Hamas took over Gaza." Kouchner made the statements following a report in the French daily, Le Figaro, that a former senior French diplomat met several weeks ago in the Gaza Strip with senior Hamas figures, including Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Zahar. Meanwhile, the media reported that Vice PM Haim Ramon accused PM Olmert, Defense Minister Barak and FM Livni of negotiating with Hamas.

Yediot quoted PM Olmert as saying that he has agreed to speak with the police again on Friday about the Morris Talansky affair. The media reported that State Attorney Lador publicly declared yesterday that the state suspects Olmert of personally receiving cash money from Talansky, committing fraud, breach of trust, and possibly other crimes. The media reported that the High Court of Justice is debating whether to allow early testimony from Talansky on Sunday, which Olmert's attorneys are opposed to. The Jerusalem Post quoted Lador as saying that the prosecution needs Talansky's testimony to make its case against Olmert. Maariv cited the belief of senior Labor and Kadima members that the affair increases the chance of early elections.

The Jerusalem Post reported that President Bush told Israeli leaders during his visit that he will obtain the necessary funding to aid the development and production of Israel's Arrow 3 ballistic missile defense system. The newspaper quoted senior defense officials as saying that while Bush did not come bearing other gifts such as the F-22 stealth fighter, he did commit to work with Congress to support the development of the Arrow 3. Defense Minister Ehud Barak discussed the Israeli request for funding with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, with whom he met in Jerusalem on Sunday. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel is seeking close to \$150 million for the project.

Ha'aretz reported that FM Tzipi Livni suggested during talks yesterday with visiting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that Israel and the Palestinians are not likely to reach agreement on the core issues during 2008. "The time frame in which an agreement will be reached is important, but its content is even more important," Livni said. In reference to the situation in Gaza, Livni was quoted as saying that the "peace process is in and of itself important, but will not alter the situation in Gaza. If there is no change in Gaza, Gaza will become a regional problem that will constitute an obstacle to the ability to reach an agreement and to its implementation." Yediot reported that PM Olmert told the members of Pelosi's CODEL that Iran will provide a nuclear umbrella for terrorists. Yediot also reported that the CODEL gave Knesset Speaker an original document of Congressional support for Israel marking 60 years of its independence,

The Jerusalem Post quoted Russian Ambassador to Israel Petr Stegnyy as saying during a Hebrew University conference yesterday that a nuclear Iran is as much a "nightmare" for Russia as it is for the U.S. and Israel, and that Moscow does not differ with Washington and Jerusalem on the need to stop Tehran, only on the way to do it.

Israel Radio reported that a far-Right group violently opposes the support of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories for the removal of unauthorized settler outposts.

Ha'aretz reported that yesterday the Knesset approved the first reading of a bill to prevent illegal entry into the country. The draft law, passed by a vote of 21-1, would impose a sentence of up to five years in prison on people who cross the border illegally, including refugees and labor migrants, while infiltrators from enemy states, such as Sudan, could be sentenced to as much as seven years behind bars. The bill also authorizes the state to hold illegal entrants, including refugees, for up to 18 days without bringing them before a judge for arraignment. In addition, it would legally authorize "hot returns" of infiltrators back to Egyptian territory, a practice that endangers their lives. Knesset Member Dov Khenin (Hadash), the sole dissenter in the plenum vote, called the bill draconian, while refugee rights organizations said it contained a number of "terrible" provisions.

Major media reported that the U.S. Supreme Court denied an appeal by convicted Nazi camp guard John Demjanjuk to overturn his deportation order. Demjanjuk was sentenced to death in Israel in 1988, and later returned to the U.S.

Maariv reported that Attorney Uzi Aharon, the Deputy Mayor of the town of Or Yehuda, who is fighting against "missionaries" who try to convert Jews to Christianity, ordered the burning of hundreds of copies of the New Testament. The newspaper quoted Dr. Ephraim Zuroff, the Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel, as saying that Jews must respect all Holy Scriptures of Christianity and Islam, but that missionary activity should not be allowed.

Major media reported that yesterday at Tel Aviv University former U.S. vice president Al Gore received the \$1 million Dan David Prize for his work in raising international awareness of the threat of global warming. Ha'aretz quoted Gore as saying that he would contribute the award to bodies that work to protect the earth. Leading Israeli author Amos Oz also was among the recipients of the prize.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the Israel Antiquities Authority as saying that for the second time in the past year, archeologists have uncovered a Second Temple Period quarry whose stones were used to build the Western Wall. It is located about two kilometers north of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Leading media reported that President Bush's speech in Sharm el-Sheikh on Sunday has aggravated tensions between Washington and Cairo.

The Jerusalem Post reported that an emergency evacuation plan for the kibbutzim within rocket and mortar range of Gaza was finalized this week, but that the (Labor-affiliated) United Kibbutz Movement has no plans to execute it.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a new police station has quietly opened in El, an area between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim that has been a subject of continuing controversy.

In a Maariv feature, Daniel Levy and Jeremy Ben-Ami, founders of the new Jewish lobby in the U.S., explain why their conciliatory policy is good for Israel.

Ha'aretz reported that last weekend an IDF committee rejected an appeal by Palestinians to revoke the declaration of two plots of land near the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba as state lands.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that yesterday at the Hawara roadblock south of Nablus a female corporal identified a would-be suicide bomber, who was immediately killed by security forces.

Ha'aretz reported that Ilan Bracha and Lenny Sporn, two Israeli realtors in New York City, have joined forces with 16 other property brokers to control the local market.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "If nothing happens at the last minute, Israel is heading toward a tahdiya [lull]. It is doing this, paradoxically, at a time when the terrorism of Hamas in the Gaza Strip is the less troublesome threat."

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz: "A truce with the terrorists, meaning that Israel would cease its attacks against organizations in Gaza whose leaderships are pledged to Israel's destruction, is ludicrous and self-defeating."

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "For the first time, there is local economic optimism in Palestine (not in Gaza), which is disconnected from Israel's good or ill will."

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Bin Ladin remembered Israel as it marked its 60th anniversary.... But Islam is the Muslims' biggest enemy -- not just an enemy, but a murderous one."

Block Quotes:

1I. "In Gaza Conflict, Iran's Fingerprints Are Everywhere"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/20): "Israel finds it hard to explain to the world what is very clear from its point of view -- the unacceptable threat posed to Sderot, Ashkelon and other areas. A foreign minister from a European country, who recently visited Israel, asked his hosts how many civilians have died since the Qassam rockets began falling. When he was told that there have been 15 dead in seven years, less than those killed in a large suicide bombing, the minister's response was almost disdainful. If nothing happens at the last minute, Israel is heading toward a tahdiya [lull]. It is doing this, paradoxically, at a time when the terrorism of Hamas in the Gaza Strip is the less troublesome threat. Israel will opt for a cease-fire for several months, even though it has no illusions where things are headed: toward a future confrontation with Hamas, which may involve a conflagration on other fronts -- for example, a strong response from Hizbullah to fighting in the Gaza Strip. Several years ago, in a relatively rare presentation, [then] Iran's Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani unfolded the defense doctrine of his country: the concept of 'from afar and near.' Hizbullah, it was hinted, will serve as the forefront of the Iranian effort, in case the U.S. or Israel target Iran's nuclear installations. Since then, Israel has been readying for the likely scenario where a future attack on Iran will result in Shihab ballistic missiles being fired from Iran, but also barrages of rockets fired by Hizbullah, Hamas, and possibly also Syria.."

II. "A Cease-Fire with Terror?"

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz (5/20): "Israel's victory over Palestinian terror, which put an end to the daily bouts of suicide bombings, also induced amnesia in the minds of some of Israel's leaders. The lesson was quickly forgotten.... After the latest attack on Ashkelon, the Defense Minister declared that we must think before we act. He has had two years to think

about this problem, but has still not found the answer -- which is simple, even if unpleasant: The rockets have to be moved out of range of Israeli towns by the presence of Israeli ground troops in the area. Now the Olmert government is placing its hopes on proposing a cease-fire to the terrorists. A truce with the terrorists, meaning that Israel would cease its attacks against organizations in Gaza whose leaderships are pledged to Israel's destruction, is ludicrous and self-defeating. It has not worked with Hizbullah, it will not work with Iran, and it won't work with Hamas. Until such time as Israel adopts the only strategy that works in the war against terror -- attacking the terrorists until they are soundly defeated -- Israel will continue to be weakened, and its citizens will continue to be casualties of terrorist acts."

III. "We Are Not in the Middle East"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/20): "[At the 1994 Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit in Casablanca], the Israeli initiative and desire to lead an economic revolution throughout the Arab Middle East stood out in every meeting and panel discussion.... It turns out that the Arabs can, and prefer to, develop without us. Particularly now, when they have a great deal of money to invest: the financial reserves of the Arab-Muslim world amount to \$3.4 trillion and are increasing every moment.... Look at the Palestinians. From the Palestinian cities of the West Bank come reports about positive economic ferment, a rising wave of local initiatives and the population's strong desire to pull itself out of poverty. This time no thanks to us, without our involvement and despite our roadblocks. The extreme change in the atmosphere and attitude have given rise to the impressive Palestinian Investments Conference, which will meet tomorrow in Bethlehem with the participation of leading businesspeople in the region, but with no clear Israeli presence. For the first time, there is local economic optimism in Palestine (not in Gaza), which is disconnected from Israel's good or ill will. Maybe it is better that way..... The Palestinian and Arab business community is not enthusiastic over the idea of an economic alliance with us. Its members are not interested in our bear hugs. They have the capabilities and the resources to develop without Israel getting under their skin. From their perspective, we are still not in the Middle East. When their opinion changes and they become interested in working together with us, they know where to find us. It will not be at the conferences."

IV. "Until the Last Muslim"

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (5/20): "Bin Ladin remembered Israel as it marked its 60th anniversary. It was so sweet of him to join our celebrations, and, like his hated Shi'ite 'Shi'ites are worse than Jews') Ahmadinejad, he proclaims the joint goal of eliminating Israel. The struggle will go on, the Islamist tyrant promises, 'until the last centimeter, the last Muslim'.... But Islam is the Muslims' biggest enemy -- not just an enemy, but a murderous one.... [This is the case in] Algeria ... in Afghanistan ... and in Sudan.... [As in Africa in 1998] Al Qaida's men deal in infernal bombings in Iraq, whose sole purpose is to murder masses of other Muslims.... Bin Ladin has said that the struggle would go on 'until the last Muslim.' Experience proves that he means every one of his words."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Former Mossad director Ephraim Halevy wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[When it starts speaking with Iran], Washington will be in need of the talents and experience of conductors of dialogue like [Robert] Gates, [Dennis] Ross and Henry

Kissinger, who also came out recently in support of dialogue with Iran. At such a time Israel must not be absent from the discussion table. For us it is a matter of life and death."

Block Quotes:

"Very Soon We'll Be Talking"

Former Mossad director Ephraim Halevy wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/20): "There are many signs that in the near future the United States is likely to countenance attempts at a serious dialogue, overt or covert, in one form or another, with Tehran. It will have to address this possibility especially if President Bush is contemplating the possibility of resorting to force in one form or another in the next few months, because it is reasonable to assume that he will feel that he has to show his people that he repeatedly examined the possibility of negotiations before he decided that all else had failed. In order to create all these 'levers of influence' on Iran about which Defense Secretary Gates spoke [on the day before President Bush's speech to the Knesset], and as an essential background for dialogue, the United States will have to step up growing pressure on Iran, both in the economic and financial areas, and by a demonstration of threatening military power. Then perhaps Iran will want to hold a dialogue and to achieve understandings, just as Hamas is seeking them today. Then Washington will be in need of the talents and experience of conductors of dialogue like Gates, [Dennis] Ross and Henry Kissinger, who also came out recently in support of dialogue with Iran. At such a time Israel must not be absent from the discussion table. For us it is a matter of life and death."

13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "No gatekeeper stifles criticism of Israeli policies among U.S. Jews. There are no risks, not on the Left or on the Right, in proffering advice to Israel from the Diaspora. All one needs is lots of hubris."

Block Quotes:

"Urban Legend"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (5/20): "The founding of Peace Now, the zealously anti-settlement movement, led its U.S. Jewish supporters to begin their own lobbying, starting in 1978. Some U.S. Jews, still more to the Left, went further. It was a Jewish academic who drafted the November 1988 declaration of independence for the 'State of Palestine which Yasser Arafat in Tunis dutifully proclaimed. And rightist Diaspora groups, rabbis notably among them, have since 1993 been bitterly and prominently critical of Israeli government efforts to reach land-for-peace deals with the Palestinians. So the notion that U.S. Jews have ever been hesitant to break with Israeli policies is simply uninformed by history.... Most U.S. Jews have never visited Israel, let alone a 'settlement.' Many are clueless about the strategic value of the West Bank and couldn't distinguish between an 'ideological' settlement in the heart of Samaria [the northern West Bank] and Har Homa in Jerusalem. All this makes [Atlantic Monthly staff writer Jeffrey] Goldberg's calls for a 'radical rethinking of what it means to be pro-Israel' both anachronistic and disingenuous. Goldberg might glance across the page [of his own article] at veteran New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman, who's been redefining what it means to be pro-Israel for decades. Friedman, too, argues that a 'pro-Israel' president is one who draws 'red lines when Israel does reckless things' like building settlements. So let's restate the obvious: No gatekeeper stifles criticism of Israeli policies among U.S. Jews. There are no risks, not on the Left or on the Right, in proffering advice to Israel from the Diaspora. All one needs is lots of hubris."

JONES